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SUBJECT: BURMA CYCLONE: USAID/OFDA SITUATION REPORT #35

SUMMARY

1. On July 3, Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) and Government of Burma (GOB) representatives attended a "sounding session" to consult on the Village Tract Assessment preliminary findings. As of June 30, the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) had completed phase I of the early recovery Basic Services Package (BSP), reaching 250 villages. On June 30, the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) received notification from the GOB of a definitive ban on the cash transfer program in Rangoon Division, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA). As a result, WFP has discontinued all cash transfers to cyclone-affected individuals for the purchase of food. The ban will not impact ongoing or planned cash-for-work programs. From July 1 to 3, a USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) disaster specialist and two staff from the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon conducted a general needs assessment and review of USAID/OFDA implementing partner programs in Bogale Township, Irrawaddy Delta. The protection cluster has established 58 functioning child-friendly spaces in Rangoon Division and 74 in Irrawaddy Division. According to the logistics cluster, the 1,828 metric tons (MT) of cargo in Bangkok awaiting transport to Rangoon is sufficient to maintain cluster air operations through the previously announced August 10 end date. The cluster will help organizations arrange surface and sea transportation after logistics cluster cease. End Summary.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

2. On July 3, PONJA and GOB representatives attended a "sounding session" to consult on the Village Tract Assessment preliminary findings. GOB decision makers had not attended the first presentation on June 24. As of June 30, the UNDP had completed phase I of the early recovery BSP, reaching 250 villages identified as the most vulnerable and a total of 23,973 households, or an estimated 113,000 individuals. BSP activities include clearing ponds, providing shelter, and clearing debris from community spaces, such as footpaths, schools, and monastery compounds. UNDP will conduct a comprehensive follow-up in all 250 villages, including assessments of monsoon planting, community works programs, future needs planning, and ongoing support of Self Reliance Groups.

3. On June 30, WFP received notification from the GOB of a definitive ban on the cash transfer program in Rangoon Division, according to OCHA. As a result, WFP has discontinued all cash transfers to cyclone-affected individuals for the purchase of food. The ban will not impact ongoing or planned cash-for-work programs.

In response to the ban on cash transfers, WFP plans to initiate a short-term food assistance program, targeting 200,000 beneficiaries in Rangoon Division.

As of July 3, the food cluster had delivered 18,703 MT of food assistance to affected areas, of which 14,564 MT had been distributed. The market assessment survey, conducted by WFP and cooperating partners, concluded on July 6 after covering 35 markets across 21 townships in Irrawaddy Delta. WFP subsequently undertook commodity price monitoring to provide further context to the market survey assessment findings. WFP has scheduled additional assessments, including a Food and Nutrition Survey conducted jointly with the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) from July to August.

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

15. A team of USAID/OFDA disaster specialists remains in Burma monitoring the humanitarian situation, meeting with humanitarian partners, coordinating USAID/OFDA humanitarian assistance, and implementing the USAID/OFDA transition from emergency response to early recovery. From July 1 to 3, a USAID/OFDA disaster specialist and two staff from the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon conducted a general needs assessment and review of USAID/OFDA implementing partner programs in Bogale Township, Irrawaddy Delta, the results of which will be outlined in a forthcoming cable.

PROTECTION

16. The U.N. Protection Cluster continues to create child-friendly spaces in villages and temporary settlements to promote protective environments. The cluster has established 58 functioning child-friendly spaces in Rangoon Division and 74 in Irrawaddy Division.

17. The Women's Protection Technical Working Group has established terms of reference, agreeing to develop a strategy to integrate women's protection programs across all clusters. The working group is also developing advocacy tools, resources for partners and clusters, and a strategy to engage with and build on the experiences of local non-governmental organizations. In addition, the cluster plans to provide technical support to the GOB Department of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement to develop a National Plan of Action on Women.

18. USAID/OFDA is supporting two humanitarian organizations to provide safe and protected environments for vulnerable populations affected by the cyclone. World Vision is working with affected children in Bogale Township, while UNICEF is co-coordinating the protection of women and children cluster and implementing activities, including establishing child-friendly spaces, family tracing and reunification, and community-based psychosocial care.

LOGISTICS

19. To date, the logistics cluster helicopters have conducted 466 flights reaching 89 remote locations. The five helicopters can operate only while existing fuel supplies remain, however, as WFP has not received permission from the GOB to place fuel bladders at the logistics hubs. Therefore, helicopters operate for approximately half a day before returning to Rangoon. WFP continues to work with the GOB to obtain the proper clearance for stationing the fuel bladders at the logistics hubs. The logistics cluster is planning to extend the contract on the helicopters through July 14.

110. WFP notes that passenger transport via the helicopters continues to run smoothly and encourages organizations to continue to submit passenger transport requests as early as possible. The logistics cluster prioritizes personnel accompanying or planning to distribute the cargo. The helicopter operations manager requested at the July 1 meeting that organizations make every effort to correctly identify the weight and volume of cargo reserved for helicopter flights.

¶11. According to the logistics cluster, the 1,828 MT of cargo in Bangkok awaiting transport to Rangoon is sufficient to maintain cluster air operations through the previously announced August 10 end date. However, a USAID/OFDA disaster specialist in Rangoon noted from discussions with the logistics cluster that the contracts for the two aircraft constituting the airbridge from Bangkok to Rangoon are currently scheduled to expire on July 21 and 23, though additional funding may be available to extend operations to the end of the month. The logistics cluster plans to arrange sea and surface transportation for any of the 1,828 MT of cargo still remaining in Bangkok after the aircraft contracts expire, whether on July 21 and 23 or at the end of the month. The logistics cluster is currently utilizing 60 percent of the funding originally pledged in support of the special operations appeal, which covers 90 days of operations.

¶12. According to USAID/OFDA disaster specialists, at the July 1 and 2 cluster meetings in Bangkok and Rangoon, respectively, cluster lead representatives encouraged humanitarian organizations to begin to arrange alternative transportation methods. Due to airbridge capacity restraints through the August 10 end date, the cluster is not accepting additional Cargo Movement Requests (CMRs) from humanitarian organizations. However, the logistics cluster indicated readiness to accept additional CMRs on an emergency, case-by-case basis to assist organizations unable to secure alternative transportation for critical or time-sensitive cargo scheduled to arrive in Bangkok in the near future. Cluster partners also intend to assist organizations in arranging non-cluster sea and surface transportation after the cluster logistics system closes down on August 10. The cluster lead also noted WFP's intention to make storage assets, including the cluster warehouse in Rangoon, available to humanitarian organizations after cluster operations cease.

VILLAROSA